

# SENATE RECORD VOTE ANALYSIS

104th Congress  
1st Session

Vote No. 360

August 4, 1995, 1:08 p.m.  
Page S-11377 Temp. Record

## DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION/Location of New Tritium Facility

**SUBJECT:** National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 1996 . . . S. 1026. Thurmond motion to table the Reid Bryan amendment No. 2113 to the Thurmond amendment No. 2111.

### ACTION: MOTION TO TABLE AGREED TO, 57-43

**SYNOPSIS:** As reported, S. 1026, the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 1996, will authorize \$264.7 billion in total budget authority for the Department of Defense, national security programs of the Department of Energy, civil defense, and military construction accounts. This amount is \$7 billion more than requested (\$5.3 billion more for procurement and \$1.7 billion more for research and development), and is \$2.6 billion less than the amount approved in the House-passed bill.

The Thurmond amendment would offer substitute provisions for Title XXXI, which will authorize funds for Department of Energy national security programs. Changes include the following: the tritium production and plutonium disposition provisions would not favor a multipurpose reactor approach; any new tritium production facility would be at Savannah River, South Carolina; \$10 million would be made available for university research on plutonium; funding for nuclear stockpile stewardship would be increased by \$239 million (for industrial partnerships); funding for stockpile management would be cut by \$215 million; the Nuclear Posture Review would be used to determine the size of the nuclear weapons stockpile; funding would be increased for verification and control technology by \$78 million to the requested level; funding would be increased for technology development for carrying out environmental restoration and waste management activities; the exemption for the Department of Energy's defense facilities from the National Environmental Policy Act would be removed; and the section would be removed that will prohibit international inspections of defense nuclear facilities until the Secretary of Energy certifies that no restricted data or classified information will be revealed.

**The Reid/Bryan amendment** would strike the requirement to site the Department of Energy's new tritium production facility at its Savannah River site in South Carolina. (Tritium is a radioactive gas that is used in almost all U.S. nuclear weapons for a booster effect. Its half life is a little over 12 years. The United States does not currently produce tritium. By 2016, even using existing reserves, the United States will not have enough tritium to meet its defense needs. It will take approximately 15 years to build an

(See other side)

YEAS (57)			NAYS (43)			NOT VOTING (0)	
Republicans (49 or 91%)	Democrats (8 or 17%)		Republicans (5 or 9%)	Democrats (38 or 83%)		Republicans (0)	Democrats (0)
Abraham	Hutchison	Biden	Burns	Akaka	Kennedy		
Ashcroft	Inhofe	Breaux	Craig	Baucus	Kerrey		
Bennett	Kassebaum	Byrd	Gorton	Bingaman	Kerry		
Bond	Kyl	Heflin	Jeffords	Boxer	Kohl		
Brown	Lott	Hollings	Kempthorne	Bradley	Lautenberg		
Campbell	Lugar	Johnston		Bryan	Leahy		
Chafee	Mack	Mikulski		Bumpers	Levin		
Coats	McCain	Nunn		Conrad	Lieberman		
Cochran	McConnell			Daschle	Moseley-Braun		
Cohen	Murkowski			Dodd	Moynihan		
Coverdell	Nickles			Dorgan	Murray		
D'Amato	Packwood			Exon	Pell		
DeWine	Pressler			Feingold	Pryor		
Dole	Roth			Feinstein	Reid		
Domenici	Santorum			Ford	Robb		
Faircloth	Shelby			Glenn	Rockefeller		
Frist	Simpson			Graham	Sarbanes		
Gramm	Smith			Harkin	Simon		
Grams	Snowe			Inouye	Wellstone		
Grassley	Specter						
Gregg	Stevens						
Hatch	Thomas						
Hatfield	Thompson						
Helms	Thurmond						
	Warner						

#### EXPLANATION OF ABSENCE:

- 1—Official Business
- 2—Necessarily Absent
- 3—Illness
- 4—Other

#### SYMBOLS:

- AY—Announced Yea
- AN—Announced Nay
- PY—Paired Yea
- PN—Paired Nay

operational tritium supply facility.)

Debate was limited by unanimous consent. Following debate, Senator Thurmond moved to table the Reid amendment. Generally, those favoring the motion to table opposed the amendment; those opposing the motion to table favored the amendment.

**Those favoring** the motion to table contended:

The Savannah River site was chosen because it is the only site that makes economic sense for the American taxpayers. For over 40 years this site has been used for separating and recycling tritium. The United States has invested heavily in this unique infrastructure. The expertise and experience of the personnel at this site are without equal. Further, considering that this function will continue, it makes simple business sense to collocate production facilities at the same site. Otherwise, the United States will have to incur the expense of building a special transportation system to move this gas from one site to the other. Several decades ago, the farmers in this community had their land condemned to build the Savannah River facility. This community sacrificed for its country, and it should not now be abandoned. This site is clearly the best site, and it is therefore appropriate to demand that the new tritium production facility be built at it.

**Those opposing** the motion to table contended:

If Senators are so certain that the Savannah River site is superior then they should allow it to compete for this new tritium facility. The Senators from Nevada are convinced that the site in their State may be preferable depending on the type of technology that is ultimately chosen to produce the tritium, and they are willing to let their site compete. In their opinion, if the Department of Energy determines that the best way to produce tritium is with a linear accelerator, then they think Nevada clearly has the edge. If, however, the Department decides on building a new reactor, they agree that the Savannah site will be preferable. This decision is technical, though, and should be made by the experts at the Department of Energy instead of by Members of Congress. Our understanding is that a decision will be made around the first of the year. Two other arguments have been made by our colleagues in favor of the bill's language. First, they have said that the fact that these people gave up their land, and have worked at this site for 45 years, means that they have a right to keep this site operating permanently. However, the same argument could be made for every other nuclear facility around the country. In each area, some people have sacrificed. We need not shed too many tears--in each area, the Federal presence has also meant a lot of new jobs and a lot of investment. The second argument is that collocating tritium production will somehow eliminate the need to transport tritium gas. This argument is false. Unless that tritium is produced at the Pantex site in Amarillo, Texas, it is going to have to be transported, because tritium is put into warheads at the Pantex site. In summary, we are not arguing for one site over another for the new tritium production facility. Instead, all we are arguing for is to let the experts make the choice. We think this demand is reasonable, and therefore oppose the motion to table.